Vigiliae Christianae 44 (1990), 6-24, E. J. Brill, Leiden

FROM ALEXANDRIA TO ROME: THE VALENTINIAN CONNECTION TO THE INCORPORATION OF EXORCISM AS A PREBAPTISMAL RITE

BY

ELIZABETH A. LEEPER

During Christianity's earliest years, according to the New Testament witness, it was not difficult to become a member of the fledgling Christian Church. In front of synagogues and amidst marketplaces, one of the evangelists, such as Peter or Paul, would preach the good news of salvation in Christ Jesus, calling upon the gathering crowds to repent and be baptized (Acts 2.14-42; 3.12-4.4). Sometimes the message was given individually, as when Philip gave private instruction to the queen's eunuch, baptizing him in a nearby river (Acts 8.26-39). Whether to large crowds, small groups, or single seekers of truth, the book of Acts reports that the Christian gospel was taught and people were added to the new and rapidly growing church by baptism (cf. Acts 16.31-34; 13.15-44). Instruction and repentance were the primary criteria for membership.

By the third century, however, we find an elaborate apparatus in place in the form of the catechumenate and its concomitant rites to prepare people for baptism and entrance into the Christian community. The period of instruction is lengthy, usually for three years or more, and preparation includes prayer, fasting, and a series of antidemonic rites, such as exorcism, all geared to ensure that the candidate is fit in heart and mind to receive the sacrament of new birth.

The fully-developed exorcism ritual found in the *Apostolic Tradition*, circa 215, is the earliest example we have in which exorcism has been incorporated as an essential element of the baptismal process in the mainstream Christian Church. Yet there is no evidence from the second century to suggest that this has been a standard practice of the Roman church.[1] Whence and when did exorcism as a baptismal ritual come? The earliest evidence, from Theodotus, gives us a clue both as to the origins of prebaptismal exorcism and as to how the rite came to be a

fundamental part of the rituals of the Roman church. We find a common element between Theodotus of Alexandria and the mainline church at Rome in the person of Valentinus, second century Christian teacher and gnostic. It was Valentinus himself, we would like to postulate, who brought the exorcistic practices of a branch of the Alexandrian church to Rome, where they were incorporated into the Roman ritual, a ritual that eventually became standard throughout the Christian world.

Alexandria

Theodotus, a pupil of Valentinus, was active in Alexandria as a Christian gnostic teacher, c. 140-160. Excerpts of his teaching have been preserved for us by Clement of Alexandria,[2] and remain an important source for Valentinian gnosticism. Amonst the excerpts (*Exc.* 67-86) is evidence for Theodotian baptismal practices, interpreted in terms of gnostic cosmology and soteriology. Although there is evidence of a growing concern about evil spirits, the Theodotian rite contains the earliest known evidence explicitly stating the need to rid a person of all evil spirits before baptism.

According to Theodotus, all human beings are subject to Fate, invisible Powers that are ascendent at the time of a person's birth (*Exc.* 69). These Powers are both beneficent and maleficent, fighting for and against one; however the good Powers are not sufficient to rescue human beings and save them from slavery to the evil Powers (*Exc.* 72-73). Only the Savior Christ can break the bonds of Fate, transferring human beings from its dominion to himself, and it is in baptism that this release takes effect (*Exc.* 77-78). Baptism chases away the demons (i.e., the evil Powers and Principalities), breaks the bonds of Fate, and incorporates a person into Christ, thus transferring him or her from death into life.[3] Baptism involves renouncing the evil Powers (ἀποτασσομένων ἡμῶν ταῖς πονηραῖς Ἀρχαῖς), who, upon the neophyte's rising from the baptismal waters, no longer have control but are forced to shudder instead. From enslavement to demons, the neophyte is now a servant of God and lord of the unclean spirits (καὶ κύριος ἀκαθάρτων λέγεται Πνευμάτων; *Exc.* 77).

While in the baptismal waters, the convert also is sealed in the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. This seal is a sign of ownership as the new Christian bears the Name of God and is reformed in the image of the Spirit. Furthermore, the seal also places the person

beyond demonic threats, releasing him or her from the realm of corruption (*Exc.* 80, 86).[4]

This does not happen automatically, however. It is possible for unclean spirits to enter the baptismal waters with the candidate, in which case the demons also receive the seal and are, in effect, sealed within the person, so that no future cure is possible (*Exc.* 83).[5] In order to avoid this tragic situation, Theodotus proposes a regimen of fasting, prayer, laying on of hands, and kneeling (διὰ τοῦτο νηστεῖαι, δεήσεις, εὐχαί, <θέσεις> χειρῶν, γονυκλισίαι, ὅτι ψυχὴ "ἐκ κόσμου" καὶ "ἐκ στόματος λεόντων" ἀνασῴζεται; *Exc.* 84). There is uncertainty as to what precisely was done with the hands. Sagnard emends the text with θέσεις χειρῶν, suggesting that there was an imposition of hands, most likely as an exorcistic rite.[6] We do know that the water was exorcized, gaining both the power to separate the inferior elements (usually understood as meaning the power to ward off evil)[7] and to sanctify (Οὕτως καὶ τὸ ὕδωρ, καὶ τὸ ἐξορκιζόμενοι καὶ τὸ βάπτισμα γινόμενον, οὐ μόνον χωρ<ίζ>ει τὸ χεῖρον, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἁγιασμὸν προσλαμβάνει; *Exc.* 82). Probst believes that this is evidence of baptismal exorcism in the midsecond century, as he links the exorcism of the baptismal water with the exorcism of the baptismal candidates: *Wurde aber das Taufwasser exorzisiert, so ist die Beschwörung des Täuflings um so wahrscheinlicher.*[8] Dölger disagrees with using the fact of the exorcized water as an affirmation of the practice of exorcizing the candidates, but he does concede that the foundation of baptismal exorcism was present at that time in the presupposition of most Christians that the unbaptized were under the influence of and possessed by evil spirits.[9] When we consider Theodotus' fear about evil spirits entering the baptismal waters with the candidate, it is a matter of course that the remedies he proposes immediately after voicing this concern would be antidemonic in nature. Since the first century the laying on of hands upon a demoniac in conjunction with an adjuration commanding the demon to flee was a standard exorcistic practice. Moreover, it would be natural to combine various antidemonic techniques and use all available resources, both human and divine, to rid the person of all demonic influence. Thus the candidate fasts, God is entreated, and someone with authority lays on hands and exorcizes. No source of power remains untouched in an effort to ensure spiritual purity.

Of equal importance with the baptismal washing is the attainment of gnosis—knowledge of who we were, what we have become, and where

we are going, the secrets of birth and rebirth (*Exc.* 73). Despite the gnostic affirmation that knowledge comes through revelation, the Nag Hammadi documents show that gnosis was attained not only by direct revelation, but also through the writings and the instruction of those who already posessed such wisdom. Most likely there was a period of instruction before baptism, when the convert gained the knowledge necessary for salvation. In order to ensure that the canditate was truly prepared for the spiritual transformation that lay ahead, it is highly likely that an interrogation either preceded or was part of the baptismal ceremony.

Thus we find the various elements that comprised the baptismal ritual known to Theodotus: catechesis, interrogation, exorcism, renunciation, baptism, and sealing. The new convert wishing to enter the church under Theodotus' tutelage would receive instruction about the Christian faith from a Valentinian perspective, attaining the necessary gnosis; would spend time in fasting and prayer, probably with hands imposed in exorcism, in addition to personally renouncing all evil Powers; would be examined as to his or her knowledge of the wisdom being imparted; and finally would descend into the baptismal waters, be sealed in the Name of the Trinity, and rise again as a gnostic Christian.

From beginning to end an antidemonic theme runs through the process. It is Fate, that union of malevolent Powers, that initially enslaves a person, and without the proper precautions those unclean spirits that are identified with the evil Powers can become permanently sealed so that the bonds of Fate can never be broken. The training received, whether it be instruction or exorcism, is all aimed at freeing one from demonic control, and, as a further measure, the water itself is exorcized (τὸ ἐξορκιζόμενον) to help separate one from all evil. Even after baptism the new Christian is warned to put on the armor of Christ in order to "quench the darts of the devil" (*Exc.* 85).

The traditional view of the gnostics is that they taught that spirituals or pneumatics were saved automatically, by nature (cf. Ireneaus, *Adv. Haer.* I.6.2), but the concern that Theodotus evinces over the power of evil spirits, even following baptism and the attainment of gnosis, belies this assumption. It is apparent that no class of person, no degree of Christian, is exempt from danger. Fasting and prayer, exorcism and renunciation, baptism and sealing, are prescribed for all. The evil Powers are cunning, and careful vigilance is needed to thwart them and thus obtain the seal that saves.

Rome

Even though there was a growing tradition in the second century associating unclean spirits with the unbaptized, the excerpts of Theodotus contain the earliest known evidence for the practice of expelling evil spirits before proceeding to the baptismal waters and thus for the intimate association of exorcism with baptism. Theodotus, however, was a Valentinian, and his teaching probably reflects what went on in the Valentinian gnostic groups in Alexandria, not necessarily the practices of the mainstream Christian church of Clement.[10] The first clear association of exorcism with baptism in the Catholic Church occurs in the *Apostolic Tradition*, commonly attributed to Hippolytus of Rome, c. 215.[11] Here we find the catechumenate fully established with clear procedures laid down for the enrollment, instruction, proximate preparation, and baptism of the convert. Again we find antidemonic exhortations and rites from beginning to end, with investigations conducted as to the candidate's spiritual purity and preparedness at several points in the process.

The first such examination is upon enrollment, when the candidates are questioned about their lives hitherto. Anyone who at this early juncture is found to have a demon is forbidden catechetical instruction until he or she has been purified (ἐὰν δέ τις δαίμονα ἔχῃ, διδασκέσθω μὲν τὴν εὐσέβειαν, μὴ προσδεχέσθω δὲ εἰς κοινωίαν πρὶν ἂν καθαρισθῇ; *AT* 16.8). Three years of instruction follow this first determination of degree of cleanliness, during which time the teacher prays and lays hands upon the catechumens before dismissal (*AT* 19.1).

Those who are chosen to be baptized are set aside from the others for a period of time preceding the Great Vigil of Easter, when baptisms traditionally took place. From this time until the Vigil, the candidates for baptism receive daily instruction and daily exorcism, the last exorcism being administered by the bishop himself (*AT* 20.3). Here again, those who are not found to be pure are put aside because the strange spirit continues to hide itself within them (*si quis autem non est bonus* (καλός) *aut non est purus* (καθαρός), *ponatur seorsum, quia non audivit verbum in fide* (πίστις), *quia impossibile ut alienus se abscondat semper*; *AT* 20.4). On Friday and Saturday of Holy Week, the candidates fast, and on Saturday they pray together kneeling and are once more exorcized by the bishop, who lays hands upon them while adjuring the evil

spirits to flee, breathes on their faces, and seals their foreheads, ears, and noses (*AT* 20.7-8). Finally, on Easter Eve, the candidates renounce Satan (ἀποτάσσομαι σατανᾶς; *AT* 21.9), are anointed with exorcized oil, called the Oil of Exorcism (ἐξορκισμός), while the priest commands all evil spirits to depart (*AT* 21.7, 10), go down naked into the water, and are baptized while making a threefold interrogation and confession of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (*AT* 21.12-18). They are then anointed with the Oil of Thanksgiving (εὐχαριστία; *AT* 21.19) and sealed in confirmation (*AT* 22.1-3),

We find many of the same elements—instruction, exorcism, fasting, prayer, renunciation, interrogation, baptism, sealing—in the *Apostolic Tradition* that we found in Theodotus. The rites have been expanded or, at least, are described in greater detail here, but there is nothing radically new in the ritual itself. We do not find the theological explanations that obscure our view of the Theodotian ritual, and it can safely be assumed that Hippolytus and most of the Roman church would not agree with the cosmology and theological interpretations of Theodotus.

Despite the different styles and purposes of these two documents, the similarity that is apparent between them is remarkable and cannot be attributed either to chance or to the assumption that Dix makes that the rites of the Roman church were "typical of the practice of the Great Church everywhere in the second century."[12] Certainly the pattern of teaching and baptism was normative within Christianity, but given both the paucity of second century evidence for actual baptismal practices beyond the demand for instruction, washing in water, and, in many places, fasting, and what we do know about the diversity that characterized second century Christian communities, it cannot be assumed that antidemonic elements were found everywhere that early. It is only in the third century that indications of a more fully articulated baptismal ceremony and of the widespread acceptance of practices such as renunciation and exorcism appear, and even then they scarcely can be considered universal.

This leaves us, however, with the necessity of trying to account for the similarity between the rites of Theodotus and Hippolytus, between second century Alexandria and third century Rome, leading us to Valentinus, the second century conduit between these two metropolises of the Roman Empire and centers of the Christian faith.

Valentinus

Valentinus, Christian gnostic and teacher, was, according to Epiphanius, from the seacoast town of Phrebonis in Egypt, whence he moved to Alexandria to receive a Greek education (*Haer.* 31.2). His followers, Clement tells us, claimed that Valentinus was a student of Theudas, who himself was a disciple of the apostle Paul (*Strom.* VII.17.106). As Anne McGuire warns us, this report must be taken with at least a grain of salt, closely linked as it is to the Valentinian claim to apostolic authority.[13] It is likely, however, that Valentinus became a Christian in Egypt, a conclusion that is supported by the fact that Valentinus was a Christian teacher in Rome, an unlikely position for one newly converted. Clement also tells us that Valentinus was a contemporary of Basilides, both of whom were active in Alexandria during Hadrian's reign (A.D. 117-138) (*Strom.* VII.17.106). During the episcopacy of Hyginus (A.D. 136-140), Valentinus moved to Rome, where he flourished as a Christian teacher under Pius (A.D. 140-155) into the time of Anicetus (A.D. 155-166) (Irenaus, *Adv. Haer.* III.4.3). Tertullian places Valentinus in Rome under Eleutherius (A.D. 175-189) but this is clearly wrong, especially since he also says that Valentinus was in Rome during the reign of Antoninus Pius (A.D. 138-161) (*Praes.* 30), which accords with both Clement and Irenaeus. Thus we can date Valentinus' stay in Rome to A.D. 138-160.[14]

While attestations from the heresiologists as to Valentinus' presence in Alexandria and Rome are generally considered reliable, reports of his activities and of his relationship with the church in Rome must be examined far more cautiously. Justin, a contemporary of Valentinus in Rome, makes no mention of him in his *First Apology*. Since he does discuss Marcion as a man aided by devils, currently teaching people to deny God (*1 Apol.* 58), and lists him with Simon Magus and Meander as subjects of a treatise of his against heretics (*1 Apol.* 26; this treatise is no longer extant), this silence regarding Valentinus is most puzzling and leads us to believe that at the time of the writing of the Apology (c. 148), Justin either did not consider Valentinus a heretic or had simply not heard of him. Later, in his *Dialogue with Trypho* (c. 155-161), he does include the Valentinians amongst his list of heretics who call themselves Christians, yet whom he claims are outside "our" communion (*Dial.* 35); it is important to note, however, that he does not name Valentinus himself. Apparently between the *First Apology* and

the *Dialogue* a distinction was being made, at least by some Christian teachers such as Justin, between "us" and "them," and an effort was being exerted to distinguish "heretics" from true Christians.

Our next report about Valentinus comes from Irenaeus, who compares both Valentinus and Marcion with Polycarp, who visited Rome c. 154.[15] Polycarp, according to Irenaeus, was responsible for causing many people to turn away from the previously mentioned heretics (including Valentinus and Marcion) "to the Church of God" (εἰς τὴν ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ θεοῦ). Irenaeus then continues with anecdotes about John's encounter with Cerinthus in the bathhouse ("Let us fly lest even the bathhouse collapse, because Cerinthus, the enemy of truth, is within") and Polycarp's retort to Marcion ("I recognize [you], I recognize the first-born of Satan" (ἐπιγινώσκω ἐπιγινώσκω τὸν πρωτότοκον τοῦ σατανᾶ) (*Adv. Haer.* III.3.4). The overall impression that Irenaeus wants to convey is that both Valentinus and Marcion were heretics, enemies of the true Church, whom Polycarp, the honored martyr, confronted, exposing their lies and converting many of their followers. A closer examination, however, shows that Irenaeus' judgment against Valentinus is based upon "guilt by association" only—there is no evidence that Polycarp ever encountered or condemned Valentinus, but by linking Valentinus and Marcion in his readers' minds, Irenaeus hopes also to link their condemnation. Thus we have not Polycarp's judgment of Valentinus (c. 154), but Irenaeus' condemnation of Valentinus (c. 180), a full generation later.

Moreover, Gerd Lüdemann, in his compelling analysis of Valentinus and Marcion in Rome, carefully examines the relevant text and concludes that Irenaeus' assertion that Polycarp converted many of Valentinus' and Marcion's followers belongs to a different level of tradition than the stories about John and Cerinthus or Polycarp and Marcion. Irenaeus sees Polycarp as the champion against heresy, the stedfast witness (*martys*) to the truth, who, far superior to Valentinus and Marcion, not only defends the faith but also seeks out heretics in order to return them to the true Church. As Lüdemann points out, this conclusion scarcely fits the situation; indeed, even Irenaeus later says that Polycarp viewed heretics with such horror that he refused to have any communication with them (*Adv. Haer.* III.3.4). Once Irenaeus' testimony about Polycarp is discounted, the question of whether or not Marcion and Valentinus were considered heretics around A.D. 150, Lüdemann concludes, must be denied: *Die oben gestellte Frage, ob*

Irenäus haer. III,3,4 belegt, dass Marcion und Valentin um 150 n. Chr. in Rom als Häretiker galten, muss daher verneint werden.[16]

Following Irenaeus, we also have two reports from Tertullian concerning Valentinus. In his *Prescription Against Heretics*, Tertullian links Valentinus and Marcion together as believers in the doctrine of the Catholic Church until, due to restless curiosity, they were expelled more than once (*donec ob inquietam semper curiositatem, qua fratres quoque vitiabant, semel et iterum eiecti; Praes. Haer.* 30.2). In another treatise specifically against the Valentinians, Tertullian describes Valentinus as an eloquent, able man who, because of his genius, expected to become bishop of Rome. When a confessor was appointed in his stead, Valentinus broke with the Church of the Authentic Rule (*Speraverat episcopatum Valentinus, quia et ingenio poterat et eloquio, sed alium ex martyrii praerogativa loci potitum indignatus de ecclesia authenticae regulae abrupit; Adv. Val.* 4,1). Hence we have two contradictory accounts from the same writer: first that Valentinus, along with Marcion, was repeatedly evicted from the Church because of undue curiosity, and second, that Valentinus, piqued because he was passed over for bishop, separated himself from the Church. The theme of thwarted ambition as presented in the second scenario is familiar polemic, a *topos* to be used against schismatic groups over and over again, and thus is of little historical value. On the other hand Tertullian's report as to Valentinus' extraordinary qualifications probably is reliable, since it is doubtful that he would give even grudging praise to one whom he abominated as a heretic, if such praise did not rest on well-founded evidence. Moreover, this account of Valentinus' ability is confirmed, Lüdemann believes, by the extant fragments of Valentinus' writings and by his effect upon his students.[17] As to Valentinus' repeated dismissal from the church in Rome, Lüdemann believes that Tertullian knew no tradition of Valentinus breaking with the Roman church. However, since Irenaeus linked Valentinus and Marcion together as heretics, and since Marcion was said to have been expelled from the Church, this, to Tertullian's mind, meant that Valentinus suffered the same fate: he applied the tradition concerning Marcion's dismissal to Valentinus.[18] Following further examination of the evidence against Marcion, Lüdemann concludes that there is no basis to the assumption that either Valentinus or Marcion was expelled: Marcion left the Roman church to form his own community, whilst Valentinus remained within the Roman community, teaching, unhindered and admired, within the setting of a school.[19]

McGuire agrees with this assessment of Valentinus, noting that Tertullian's claim about Valentinus' ejection from the church contradicts reports of Irenaeus and Clement "who say nothing of a break between Valentinus and the Christians of Rome. While their silence cannot prove that Valentinus enjoyed a peaceful and mutually respectful relationship with all the other Christians of Rome, it does, when combined with other reports, argue strongly against a definitive expulsion of Valentinus or his followers in the next generation."[20]

Thus the evidence we have concerning Valentinus is that he was a Christian teacher whose followers claimed was a student of a student of Paul's, active first in Alexandria and then in Rome, teaching within the confines of the Christian community in Rome for twenty years, respected and admired. It is not until the end of his career that doubts begin to assert themselves as to his doctrinal uprightness, and even then there is no clear indication that he was expelled from the Church or that his school was blacklisted. The "us" and "them" language that characterizes so much antiheretical polemic does not appear until the time of his followers, as the Church, struggling with the problems of self-definition, starts to draw distinctions between the Valentinian schools and the mass of ordinary Christians. It is important to bear in mind that the Church of the second century was not the monolithic structure of true teaching and apostolic tradition that the Church Fathers try to portray. Walter Bauer's landmark work, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*,[21] even when problems with individual components are taken into account, remains a testament to the diversity that characterized the early Church. There was room for a Clement and a Valentinus, a Marcion and an Irenaeus. Although the air was often rift with polemic and with counterclaims to the apostolic faith, the Christian community was able to accommodate schools of many different complexions. Thus it is perfectly credible that Valentinus taught in Rome for over twenty years, arousing comment but not dismissal, and that he could have left his mark upon both the doctrine and the liturgy of the Church there. Furthermore, only such a scenario accounts for the accusations of Justin and Irenaeus that the Valentinians were wolves in sheep's clothing (Justin, *Dial.* 35; Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* I, Pref.). Only as active members of the Church, embedded perhaps as "cells" within the larger Christian community[22] and thus continuing to influence (or, to the heresiologists, pollute) the Church, would such a complaint be justified. Bentley Layton claims that at the turn of the

third century it was still possible for a follower of Valentinus to hold the position of presbyter in the church at Rome.[23] It was not until c. 200, due in large measure to the efforts of Irenaeus, that ordinary Christians started to think of themselves as distinct from the Valentinian school, and it was not until the late third or fourth centuries that the Valentinians considered themselves separate from the rest of Christianity and that edicts forbidding the meeting of sectarians forced the burial of the Coptic manuscripts at Nag Hammadi.[24]

Thus we have Valentinus establishing himself within the Christian community at Rome as a teacher, where, known for his genius and eloquence, he no doubt had an impact upon the teaching and practice of the Church. Is it possible, then, that he was responsible for introducing exorcism into the baptismal rites of Rome, or, at least, pushing to its logical conclusion the association between sin, evil spirits, and baptismal purity? We have noted the presence of extensive antidemonic rites both in Alexandria and in Rome, in circles where Valentinus was active and where he would have been in a position to influence liturgical changes expressive of his own teaching. But can we be sure that the ritual described and the explanations given by Theodotus are representative of his mentor and are not either Theodotus' own innovations or the general practices of the Christian community in Alexandria?

The assumption that Theodotus reflects Valentinus cannot, of course, be proven, although Gilles Quispel believes that the teachings of the Oriental School, which includes Theodotus, are very close to their master—Valentinus.[25] There is, however, supporting evidence in the form of a fragment of a letter by Valentinus, preserved by Clement (*Strom.* II.20.114). Valentinus teaches that the heart is filled with evil spirits who dwell within it, insulting and violating it with improper desires, preventing it from becoming pure. He compares it to a rural inn of the East that has an enclosed courtyard for pack animals,[26] and thus is full of filth and dung, uncared for and treated with contempt. "In this manner also the heart, as long as it meets with no forethought, is impure, being the dwelling place of many demons" (Τὸν τρόπον τοῦτον καὶ ἡ καρδία, μέχρι μὴ προνοίας τυγχάνει, ἀκάθαρτος, πολλῶν οὖσα δαιμόνων οἰκητήριον; *Strom.* II.20.114.6). But when the Father visits the heart, he makes it holy so that it shines with light. The Son is the manifestation of the Father, who visits the heart and purifies it by casting out every evil spirit (παντὸς πονηροῦ πνεύματος ἐξωθουμένου τῆς καρδάς; *Strom.* II.20.114.3). A heart filled with evil spirits would need careful cleans-

ing, and it is fully credible that Valentinus would have carried his demonology one step further and instituted or at least taught the need for exorcism in conjunction with baptism, the time, surely, when the Father would visit and cleanse the heart.

Valentinus' understanding of the demon-filled, impure, heart also accords well with Theodotus' teaching about the evil Powers (δυνάμεις κακοποιοί) who control human actions through the machinations of Fate and the unclean spirits (ἀκαθάρτα πνεύματα) who after baptism shudder before those whom previously they had obsessed (*Exc.* 70-78). Moreover, as we have shown, with Theodotus' teaching about unclean spirits who enter the baptismal waters with the candidate, antidemonic measures, such as exorcism, are essential. In addition, both Theodotus and Valentinus combine the need for knowledge (γνῶσις; *Exc.* 78.2) or forethought (προνοία; *Strom.* II.20.114.6) with the visit of the Father as additional liberating factors. Thus, both in their demonic anthropology (i.e., human beings inhabited by demons) and their soteriology (i.e., only the Lord can rescue and purify one from the evil spirits), Valentinus and Theodotus show remarkable similarities.

Furthermore, we know that neither in the Valentinian fragment nor the Theodotian excerpts can Clement be interposing his own beliefs. Clement makes it very clear that he disagrees with the theory of demons inhabiting human beings. He cites both Basilides and Valentinus in order to refute them. Amazingly, he even uses Barnabas ("Before we believed in God, the dwelling-place of our heart was unstable, truly a temple built with hands. For it was full of idolatry, and was a house of demons, through doing what was opposed to God." *Ep. Barn.* 16.7-9 cited by Clement in *Strom.* II.20.116.4), who appears to have been a proponent of the demonic condition of the human heart,[27] reinterpreting him to say that sinners act like demons, not that demons themselves dwell within them, and that sins are forgiven, not that demons are driven out (*Strom.* II.20.116.3-117.3). This is also an indication that baptismal exorcism was not a general practice of the Alexandrian church; either that, or Clement is placing himself in opposition to the Christian community in Alexandria—an unlikely conjecture since he spends no time discussing Alexandrian practices, either in refutation or reinterpretation, which he surely would have felt compelled to do were such rites part of general Christian worship.

Finally, let us look at one more document from the Valentinian school—the *Gospel of Truth*—considered by many to be by Valentinus

himself.[28] It may be a baptismal homily[29] or even a chrismation/confirmation homily,[30] and thus has direct significance to our discussion. The theme of the *Gospel of Truth* is that of salvation through knowledge (γνῶσις) of God,[31] and the homilist allows us tantalizing peeks and glimpses into Valentinian rituals. Eric Segelberg, who examines and interprets many of these cultic rites, draws attention to a passage with an antidemonic message pertinent to our investigation. The homilist is warning his flock not to return to former things, exhorting them: "Do not become a (dwelling) place for the devil, for you have already destroyed him" (Layton: "brought him to naught," p. 260; Segelberg: "thrown him out," p. 120; *EV* 33.11-21). Segelberg believes that this passage may indicate the presence of an exorcistic rite associated with baptism.[32] Certainly it is a reference to the antidemonic nature of salvation and, more specifically, considering the overall context of the treatise, to the expulsion of and liberation from the devil that one gains in baptism and chrismation. This accords well with what we have seen in the rite of Theodotus with its antidemonic emphasis and with Valentinus' own teaching about the presence of evil spirits within the unbeliever. Furthermore, considering the elliptical nature of the sources, the *Gospel of Truth* and the excerpts from Theodotus breathe the same air, where mystical concepts such as calling, knowledge, and the work of the Spirit freely mingle with concrete references to oil and water. It is certainly possible to see them both coming out of the same community, reflecting, with different emphases, similar rites and the teachings of a common master.

Conclusion

Taking into account the amassed evidence, what does our scenario look like? We find Valentinus active in Alexandria as a Christian instructor, where, presumably, Theodotus is one of his pupils. Around A.D. 138, he moves to Rome, where he is established in the general Christian community as a teacher. He is active for twenty years within the church in Rome, possibly with a school of special disciples whom he instructs in an allegorical method of biblical exegesis, accepting the Church's teachings and practices but possibly reinterpreting them in a gnostic direction. There is no evidence that he was ever ejected from the Christian community or, on the other hand, that he left the community to found his own church.

Meanwhile, whilst Valentinus is busy in Rome, we find his erstwhile pupil, Theodotus, active in the Alexandrian Christian community, also as a teacher, allegorically interpreting Christian doctrine and cult in terms of gnostic mythology, perhaps even starting a school that incorporates its own cultic practices. Certainly if Clement is a model for the rites of the ordinary Christian community, the antidemonic concerns and exorcistic techniques of the Theodotian community were not those of the Alexandrian church as a whole. But then whence did Theodotus get his baptismal ritual? It is more than likely that when Valentinus left Alexandria, Theodotus continued his master's teachings, and that, therefore, the concerns and practices we find in Theodotus are representative of Valentinus himself. Certainly what we know of Valentinus' own demonology supports this hypothesis. Furthermore, it only makes sense to suppose that Valentinus did not radically alter his teachings upon entrance into the Roman Christian community and that, therefore, both his belief in the presence of evil spirits inhabiting the unbeliever and the antidemonic practices found in Theodotus formed part of his teaching in Rome as well as in Alexandria.

This is c. 140. By c. 215 we find Hippolytus drawing up a church order that includes a well-formed catechumenate with elaborate antidemonic precautions and with exorcistic rites incorporated into the baptismal liturgy. These rites are more fully articulated than they are in Theodotus, but this is easily accounted for by the natural accretion process that all liturgy undergoes over time, and, in fact, they may be a ritual expression of the demonic concerns that so occupied Theodotus' attention. Indeed, the setting aside of anyone still found to have an unclean spirit following the bishop's scrutiny may be a final effort to prevent any demonic spirits from entering the baptismal waters with the candidate. Although Hippolytus does not speak of the danger of evil spirits receiving the seal in baptism along with the baptizand, this fear of Theodotus' may well lie behind the Roman church's repeated antidemonic rites. Hippolytus refers to his order as a longstanding tradition, a tradition that he stridently defends against innovation and change (*AT* 1.1-5). Sixty or seventy years have elapsed between Valentinus setting up shop as an instructor within the confines of the Roman Christian community, wherein he probably taught the necessity of cleansing unbelievers from demonic inhabitation before they enter the baptismal waters, and Hippolytus extolling the establishing traditions of the Roman church, traditions that include the ritual exorcism of all bap-

tismal candidates. Sixty years is long enough for a new practice, especially if the theological underpinnings are already in place, to become an established tradition. The evidence is tenuous, but the possibility is worth considering that Valentinus himself was the conduit between Alexandria and Rome, an instructor within the church who taught the necessity for prebaptismal exorcism to ensure purity and thus an important contributor to be baptismal rites of the Roman church.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bauer, Walter. *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*. Ed. Robert A. Kraft & Gerhard Krodel. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971.

Benoit, André. *Le Baptême Chrétien au Second Siècle*. Études d'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses de l'Université de Strasbourg, No. 43. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1953.

Clément d'Alexandrie. *Extraits de Théodote*. Ed. François Sagnard. Sources Chrétiennes 23. Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1970.

——, *The Excerpta ex Theodoto of Clement of Alexandria*. Ed. Robert Pierce Casey. Studies and Documents I. Ed. by Kirsopp Lake and Silva Lake. London: Christophers, 1934.

——, *Les Stromates*. Stromate II. Ed. P. Th. Camelot & C. Mondésert. Sources Chrétiennes 38. Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1954.

Dölger, Franz J. *Der Exorzismus im altchristlichen Taufritual*. Studien zur Geschichte und Kultur des Altertums, Band 3, Heft 1-2. Paderborn: Druck & Verlag von Ferdinand Schöningh, 1909.

Epiphanius. *Ancoratus und Panarion*. Ed. Karl Holl. GCS 25, 31. Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1915-1922.

Justin, "The First Apology." *Writings of Saint Justin Martyr*, pp. 33-111. Ed. Thomas B. Falls. Fathers of the Church. New York: Christian Heritage, Inc., 1948.

——, "Dialogue with Trypho." *Writings of Saint Justin Martyr*, pp. 139-366. Ed. Thomas B. Falls. Fathers of the Church. New York: Christian Heritage, Inc., 1948.

"Gospel of Truth." *Nag Hammadi Library*, pp. 37-49. Dir. James M. Robinson. Tr. George W. MacRae. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981.

Grant, Robert M. *Gnosticism and Early Christianity*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1959.

Hippolytus. *La Tradition Apostolique de Saint Hippolyte*. Essai de Reconstitution par Dom Bernard Botte. Münster Westfalen: Aschendorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1963.

Hippolytus. *The Treatise on the Apostolic Tradition of St. Hippolytus of Rome*. Ed. Gregory Dix. London: SPCK, 1937.

Irénée de Lyon. *Contre les Hérésies*. Ed. Adelin Rousseau & Louis Doutreleau. Sources Chrétiennes 211. Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1974.

Kelly, Henry A. *The Devil at Baptism: Ritual, Theology, and Drama*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985.

Layton, Bentley. *The Gnostic Scriptures*. Garden City: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1987.

Lüdemann, Gerd. "Zur Geschichte des ältesten Christentums in Rom: I. Valentin und Marcion, II. Ptolemäus und Justin." *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 70 (1979), pp. 86-114.

McGuire, Anne Marie. *Valentinus and the "Gnostike Hairesis": An Investigation of Valentinus's Position in the History of Gnosticism*. Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1983.

Probst. *Sakramente and Sakramentalien in den drei ersten christlichen Jahrhunderten*. Tubingen, 1872.

Puech, Henri Charles. "The Jung Codex and the Other Gnostic Documents from Nag Hammadi, *The Jung Codex*, pp. 11-34. Ed. F.L. Cross. London: A.R. Mowbray & Co. Limited, 1955.

Quispel, Gilles. "The Jung Codex and Its Significance." *The Jung Codex*, pp. 35-78. Ed. F.L. Cross. London: A.R. Mowbray & Co. Limited, 1955.

——, "The Original Doctrine of Valentinus." *Gnostic Studies* I, pp. 27-36. Istanbul: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut, 1974.

Rudolph, Kurt. *Gnosis: The Nature and History of Gnosticism*. Ed. Robert McL. Wilson. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983.

Säve-Soderbergh. "Det koptiska 'Evangelium Veritatis.'" *Religion och Bibel* 17 (1958).

Segelberg, Eric. "The Baptismal Rite according to some to the Coptic-Gnostic Texts of Nag-Hammadi." *Studia Patristica* 5, pp. 117-128. Ed. F.L. Cross. Texte und Untersuchungen 80. Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1963.

Tertullien. *Contre les Valentiniens*. Ed. Jean-Claude Fredouille. Sources Chrétiennes 280. Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1980.

——, *De Praescriptione Haereticorum*. Ed. R.F. Refoulé. Corpus Christianorum Series Latina I: Tertulliani Opera Pars 1, pp. 185-224. Turnholti: Typographi Brepols Editores Pontificii, 1954.

Van Unnik, W.C. "The 'Gospel of Truth' and the New Testament." *The Jung Codex*, pp. 79-129. Ed. F.L. Cross. London: A.R. Mowbray & Co. Limited, 1955.

Wilson, Robert McL. "Valentinianism and the 'Gospel of Truth.'" *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism I*, pp. 133-145. Ed. Bentley Layton. Studies in the History of Religions XLI. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1980.

NOTES

[1] This is not to say that there was not an antidemonic element in baptism. Demons were a growing concern throughout the second century, but the power of baptism over evil spirits was implicit rather than overt. We know from the *Didache* (7.4) and from Justin (*1 Apology* 61) that fasting preceded baptism. Bénoit claims that fasting may have an exorcistic basis, especially since Judaism attributed to fasting the power to drive out demons (André Benoit, *Le Baptême Chrétien au Second Siècle*, Études d'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses de l'Université de Strasbourg, No. 43 (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1953), p. 11). This deduction is not necessarily justified by the evidence, however, since not only the person about to be baptized, but also the one administering the baptism, and, in Justin's report, the community as a whole, also fasted. The Christian community and especially the baptizer have already themselves been baptized and thus

would be free of demons and demonic influences. Furthermore, Justin does not conceive of baptism in terms of breaking Satan but as illumination.

Whether or not fasting can be considered as an antidemonic precaution however, there is other evidence of a demonic concern in the baptismal rites of the second century. Justin mentions that Christians renounce demons and their ways (*1 Apol.* 14), which may be a reference to renunciation as a baptismal element. Furthermore, Barnabas describes the human heart as being full of demons before one comes to faith in God (16.8), which certainly implies that there is something about coming to faith (which can be understood as being baptized) that cleanses the demon-filled heart. This implies that exorcism is an integral part of baptism itself, a part which later, Benoit claims, was separated from baptism to become a separate rite of renunciation and exorcism (Benoit, pp. 38-39).

Thus in the second century we find antidemonic implications of baptism, but, within the mainstream Church, no evidence of exorcism as a separate baptismal rite.

[2] Clément d'Alexandrie, *Extraits de Théodote*, ed. François Sagnard, Sources Chrétiennes 23 (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1970). English trans.: *The Excerpta ex Theodoto of Clement of Alexandria*, ed. Robert Pierce Casey, Studies and Documents I (London: Christophers, 1934).

[3] SC 23, p. 229.

[4] cf. SC 23, p. 235, for Sagnard's discussion on the seal.

[5] The sealing of unclean spirits who enter the baptismal waters is a unique element in Theodotus, and is remarkably different from the perspective of other Church leaders. Ignatius claimed that Jesus was born and baptized so that his Passion hallows all waters (*Eph.* 18.2), a statement that Benoit says is the first formulation of the concept that the baptism of Christ purifies water inflicted by demons (Benoit, p. 69). Clement of Alexandria also believed that Christ's baptism purified the water for those being reborn (*Eclog. Proph.* 7.1); Tertullian claimed that the Spirit of God sanctified water so that water in turn received the power of sanctifying (*De Bapt.* 4.4-5); and Cyprian wrote that the devil "loses all the poison of his evil" when he comes to the baptismal waters (*Ep.* 69.15-16).

[6] SC 23, p. 234.

[7] Casey, p. 91

[8] "As the baptismal water is exorcized, so is the exorcism of the baptismal candidates all the more likely." Probst, *Sakramente and Sakramentalien in den drei ersten christlichen Jahrhunderten* (Tübingen, 1872), p. 132, cited in Franz J. Dölger, *Der Exorzismus im altchristlichen Taufritual*, Studien zur Geschichte und Kultur des Altertums, Band 3, Heft 1-2 (Paderborn: Druck & Verlag von Ferdinand Schöningh, 1909), p. 9.

[9] Dölger, p. 9.

[10] See pp. 15-16 for further discussion.

[11] Hippolytus, *La Tradition Apostolique de Saint Hippolyte*, Essai de Reconstitution par Dom Bernard Botte (Münster Westfalen: Aschendorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1963). English trans.: *The Treatise on the Apostolic Tradition of St. Hippolytus of Rome*, ed. Gregory Dix (London: SPCK, 1937). Chapter and paragraph numbers given in the text refer to the Dix edition.

[12] Dix, p. xl. It is clear, for example, that the practices of *AT* do not reflect those of Clement. cf. pp. 17-18 of this article.

[13] Anne Marie McGuire, *Valentinus and the "Gnostike Hairesis": An Investigation of Valentinus's Position in the History of Gnosticism* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1983), p. 77.

[14] McGuire, p. 78.

[15] Gerd Lüdemann, "Zur Geschichte des ältesten Christentums in Rom: I. Valentin und Marcion, II. Ptolemaus und Justin," *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 70 (1979), p. 89.

[16] Lüdemann, p. 90. I have not discussed it here, but Lüdemann also retraces the evidence that Irenaeus presents against Marcion.

[17] Lüdemann, p. 93.

[18] Lüdemann, p. 94.

[19] *Die Textanalysen führten zum Ergebnis, dass Marcion die romanische Gemeinde verliess, um eine neue Kirche zu gründen, Valentin dagegen innerhalb der romanischen Gemeinde verblieb, unangefochten und bewundert lehrte, d.h. wohl im Rahmen einer Schule.* Lüdemann, p. 96.

[20] McGuire, p. 80.

[21] Walter Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*, ed. Robert A. Kraft & Gerhard Krodel (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971).

[22] McGuire, pp. 80-81.

[23] Bentley Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1987), p. 270. Layton does not give any specifics.

[24] In 326, Valentinians appear in an edict of Constantine's that forbids them to hold further meetings; in 388 a Valentinian chapel was burned by orthodox Christians in Callinicum on the Euphrates; and a further decree forbidding them to assemble was legislated in 428, indicating that during the fourth and fifth centuries, the Valentinians met as a separate sect with its own buildings. Layton, pp. 271-272.

[25] Gilles Quispel, "The Original Doctrine of Valentinus," *Gnostic Studies* I (Istanbul: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut, 1974), p. 28.

[26] Layton, p. 245, fn. c.

[27] For the growing concern throughout the second century with demonic inhabitation of human beings, see Henry A. Kelly, *The Devil at Baptism: Ritual, Theology, and Drama* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), especially chapter 2: "Sin Demons and their Removal."

[28] The *Gospel of Truth* (*Evangelium Veritatis*) is the third document of the Jung Codex, also known as Nag Hammadi Codex I (cf. Kurt Rudolph, *Gnosis: The Nature and History of Gnosticism*, ed. Robert McL. Wilson (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983), pp. 34-48), is generally agreed to be from the school of Valentinus, and may be identified with the *Evangelium Veritatis* mentioned by Irenaeus as coming from the Valentinian circle (*Adv. Haer.* III.11.9). Quispel ("The Jung Codex and Its Significance," *The Jung Codex*, ed. F.L. Cross (London: A.R. Mowbray & Co., 1955), p. 50) and W.C. Van Unnik ("The Gospel of Truth' and the New Testament," *The Jung codex*, p. 93ff) date *EV* c. 150, and Robert Grant (*Gnosticism and Early Christianity*, p. 128) concurs with them in attributing it to Valentinus himself. Henri Puech ("The Jung Codex and the Other Gnostic Documents from Nag Hammadi," *The Jung Codex*, p. 18f) agrees with the date of 150, but is more reserved on the issue of authorship. On the other hand, Hans Jonas (*Gnomon* 32 (1960), p. 327ff; *Studia Patristica* 6 (1962), p. 96ff) believes that *EV* assumes a more fully developed Valentinian system and thus is a work of the Valentinian school but not by Valentinus himself, and Wilson ("Valentinianism and the 'Gospel of Truth,'" *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism I*, Studies in the History of Religions XLI (Leiden: E.J. Brill,

1980), p. 141f) argues that it reflects a stage in the development of the canon later than 150 and thus questions that this is the *EV* that Irenaeus knows.

[29] Säve-Soderbergh, "Det koptiska 'Evangelium Veritatis,'" *Religion och Bibel* 17 (1958), pp. 35-40, cited by Eric Segelberg, "The Baptismal Rite according to some of the Coptic-Gnostic Texts of Nag-Hammadi," *Studia Patristica* 5 (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1963), p. 119.

[30] SP 5, p. 120.

[31] Layton, p. 250. Although γνῶσις traditionally is simply rendered "gnosis" or translated as "knowledge," Layton consistently translates it "acquaintance," thus emphasizing the personal dimension of the human-divine encounter.

[32] SP 5, p. 120.

Wartburg Theological Seminary,
333 Wartburg Place,
Dubuque, IA 52001 U.S.A.